

**STAR-DUST
AND STONE**

By GLENN WARD DRESBACH



Lucile Williams

Hoc liber meum est.
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STAR-DUST AND STONE

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GLENN WARD DRESBACH

IN COLORS OF THE WEST

THE ENCHANTED MESA

CLIFF DWELLINGS AND OTHER POEMS

STAR-DUST *and* STONE

BY

GLENN WARD DRESBACH

Author of

"IN COLORS OF THE WEST," "THE ENCHANTED MESA,"
AND "CLIFF DWELLINGS"



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TO FOUR FRIENDS:

FIELDING,

CHARLES,

JOHN

AND

WARREN



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PREFATORY NOTE

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STAR-DUST AND STONE

MOUNTAIN WATER

MOUNTAIN water is never still
With the stillness of other waters
That have not known the lunge
Of the beautiful wild things
Pressed hard by the fanged walls
Of gorges, nor taken the plunge,
With myriad silver-misted wings,
In waterfalls.

Even in moonlight its stillness
Is that of hammered silver . . .
The hammer, from forges that blasted
The pinnacles, tipped them with fires,
Has fallen here and it rings
In rhythm that has outlasted
The wistful measures of Ages' desires
And restless wings.

And even where waters widen
The memory of those dark gorges
Through which they passed, with the throb
Of the infinite Heart, drives on.
And waters seem to be
A laughter . . . yes, and a sob
Of eagerness, till their spear of dawn
Jewels the sea.

THE GRAND CANYON

THE vast façades of soared stone now drip
With jeweled mist of the invisible tide
Of air, and flame-tipped pinnacles and spires
Now based on clouded splendors, seem to slip
Into the rippled blue robes of the sky
And stand where only silence dares abide . . .
And eyes watch here and ache with smouldering fires,
And hearts beat fast; breath catches—for a sigh.
This is the place where only earth is proud . . .
The dust of legions in this jeweled dust
Could dull no colors that survive the years.
Far clouded cliffs that merge in cliffs of cloud
Could run no wilder torrents for all tears
That ever mourned frail love and broken trust
Poured down gnashed gorges bellowing to the sun.
The thunder of all wars is caught in one
Great water-thunder, and what urge can be
Or has been, throbs in this dark pulse, to run
Down these abysmal courses to the sea . . .
So this is what was hidden under crust
Of earth! This tortured splendor of design,
Worn down, down, down—yet ever growing up
In vaster majesties of light and line.
Each spot a heavy-jeweled, brimming cup
Of wonder! We grow dizzy with such wine . . .
And we are haunted more than we may know
While wind comes smoothing footsteps from this dust.
Sands stir in whispers where the shadow plods
Beside us. We have been here . . . We must go . . .
This is the last trail of the departed gods.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SKY GARDEN

B ELOW these azure walls where breaks
Dawn's wave of bloom to toss and shine,
A valley, flowered with blue lakes
Upon a trailing silver vine,
Drifts onward and becomes as one
With flowered space and rising sun.

Far northward, over all the heights,
Emerges now a crystal glow—
A peak has soared from swirling lights
To lift its vasty bloom of snow
Asserting unity on high
With snowy cloud and upper sky.

Eyes wander back to trace the lands
For something born of human powers . . .
A fawn with daisied hide now stands
To look, then drifts away in flowers.
A bird, whose wings like petals float,
Drifts, fading on a silver note.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

BIRDS IN THE WIND

UNDER wide, driven wings of cloud, and under
The unseen, heavy-beating wings of thunder
Are wings of birds
Now tossed like blowing leaves on a forest floor,
Now held suspended a moment, immobile; once more
Like a rush of words
From a throat constricted no longer, like arrows flashing
Under the spears of lightning falling and crashing
On clouded shields . . .
I watch them go—and would not keep them from going—
At last alone with the sound of a great wind blowing
Over the fields . . .

I have known wings in a cage, I have seen them beating
At things more cruel than wind with distance meeting
Along the sky.
I have known wings that were brooding, aching, under
A still, dark thing that shook them more than thunder—
No more to fly . . .
And the thing we would keep is not the same in its prison
As when we saw the flash of its wings, arisen . . .
Its nearness yields
More emptiness than is left by the wild wings going—
Though I stand alone with the sound of a great wind
blowing
Over the fields.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

THE GNAWING MOUSE

IT could not be but stormy wind
In timbers of the lonely house . . .
It was a little restless sound—
The gnawing of a mouse.

The wind was fury that could shake
A wall though long on rock it stood,
But this sound was of small sharp teeth
That gnawed in seasoned wood.

Such gnawing never felled a house;
We should but turn and sleep once more—
A mouse is gnawing in the dark . . .
What is it hunting for?

It might have dreams of better rooms
Beyond the wall, a richer fare.
An olden hunger—and the dark—
Has set it gnawing there.

I hear it, though against the walls
The thunder of the storm is hurled,
Across the shadows of my heart,
The darkness of the world!

INTERVAL

IT was a time of tension just before
The waters break away and leap the fall,
Suspense of flight before the birds, once more
Seen on the sky, dart downward to a wall.
And it was only while the words that caught,
In tightened muscles of the throat, broke free
Before the restless urging of the thought
From intimation to reality.

Long silent temples quivered with the bell,
And banners burst to bloom along the sky,
And lifted prows rained silver on the swell
Because an interval in passing by
Caught tension of the taut unusual strings
From which are tuned the destinies of things.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

GARDEN OF THE GODS

THIS is their garden—but the gods are gone . . .
The cobalt dust on sabered grass now clings
And forests fallen here have turned to stone.
Once eagles' eyes shot fire along their wings
Where stairs, still hazed to skies, are stained with wine
And winds, like chained hounds on the ledges, whine.
In space the gold-flecked silence throbs and sings
With atoms whirling from the clutch of things.
Massed flowers of the stone no longer drip
With jeweled dew; on each stone fountain-lip
Dust clots the spreading wounds, cracked deep and dry,
And only vines of haze grow thin and slip
Back earthward from these pillars in the sky.
Against the garden's end a waterfall
Of haze is clouded—drifting into haze . . .
All day stone altars by the western wall
Had waited . . . Now the sunset's slanted blaze
Runs down from ridges carved of malachite.
All day paths waited . . . Slant-eyed foxes trot
Along them now and tiger-dreams are hot
In little brains that scent the coming night.
The tense air buzzes as with atom-wings . . .
These things we know are not enough; these things
We see are something more than we may see . . .
Here is the sense of charged, low-humming wires
Stretched from the void, and one here comes to be
Aware of currents, running secret fires,

STAR-DUST AND STONE

Through contacts still invisible . . . Once more
Responding passions that transcend desires
Would strip the cloud-husk from the lightning-core,
And reach the awful stillness at the heart
Of cyclones, and grasp down volcano-throats
The hissing lava where the furies start,
To find the source of power . . .

Distance bloats

With gorged storm now. A rabbit's frenzied cry
In fox-fangs pierces air, and soon the sky
Draws in about us. Bats' swift crazy wings
Are jerked in flight as if on careless strings
Of phantom puppet-masters. Night hawks slide
Down wires of air for field mice. Shadows glide
Into the fallen forests turned to stone . . .
All this has no importance but to things
Participating . . . So Humanity
Acquires a vast importance of its own
Shut in a little world, the whirling sea
Of starred space all around . . .

Here we have seen

No more than this . . . Night caught us here between
Known and unknown . . . here in ourselves . . . in this
Wild garden pushed against the void's abyss.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

JEWELLED MINIATURE

AN iridescent lizard darted through
The dewy valley of a leaf;
The humming bird, electric on the blue,
Stayed for a time almost as brief.
A silver cobweb ladder glistened up
 A jade stem to the blush of clover;
A dewdrop slid into a flower-cup
 And it ran over.

MAIN STREET—EL DORADO

I

ONLY the desert wind speaks by these walls today,
On drifted sands of the street falls only a coyote's
shadow . . .

Men came and dug the gold—and then they went away
From Main Street—El Dorado!

II

Once on this street had strutted Youth with a swing in its
shoulders,

Kings of a little day that had its flash of gold,
Gamblers who played with Fate with a growing stack of
boulders,

Seekers after a treasure they grasped—but could not
hold.

Here walked the women who laughed though soon the
laugh rang hollow—

Now only a tawny shadow skulks where the blown sands
whirl . . .

And over the bar, whose deep-carved sign is “The Golden
Swallow,”

Remains but dust—and the faded print of a dancing
girl.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

III

Who might come in from the desert and chance to find
today

Some little city of our dreams deserted too?
The strutting figures gone . . . and the gold taken
away . . .

And nothing more to do.

And hear but the desert wind and the shift of the ancient
sand,

And see but the stir of sand and a skulking tawny
shadow . . .

As heard and seen in cities of kings in many a land
And in Main Street—El Dorado!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

AUTUMN IN THE DESERT

NO sudden change comes here beneath the dome
Of templed vastness. Down hazed corridors
Of distance still the hanging gardens' foam
Of bloom is billowed, and on tawny floors
The jeweled shadows linger . . . only now
A chill creeps down the far-off secret stairs
To whisper, through each dark-plumed cedar bough
Along the walls, of change upon the airs,
And soon great sapphires of the mountain springs
Are shadowed by the southbound clouds of wings.

Too soon the hidden valleys see the plumes
Of grass turn pale and fall, and willows shake
Their silver down, and even under glooms
Of ledges last wild flower patterns break
And turn to fragrant dust that drifts away . . .
And gorges, bared below the sagging net
Of vines, end suddenly as if at bay
Before sky-chasms, and stone fangs are wet
With silver, and the lights along the skies
Seem fires shot straight from deep-set molten eyes.

O flesh and bone, caught here in loneliness
And subtle change, where vastness stares at space,
So near the bared brinks now no longer press
But seek the known trails and your dwelling place,

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And heap the hearth with cedar for the night
And bar the door against the rising wind . . .
But, soul, let windows wink with candlelight
Until the sickle of the moon has thinned
The clouds . . . then look how pinnacles of snow
Hold up the blue dome with its stars aglow.

No scene is empty if the heart be filled . . .
No temple desolate . . . If ecstasy
Alone could strike through chaos so and build
These silver aisles to altars that must be
Beneath a dome so starred, I can but feel
All this is true as all remembered now
Of hidden valleys and bare gorges . . . Steel
Had found my breast. Here star-dust finds my brow . . .
Here Autumn, walking under jeweled trees,
Lets fall new Apples of Hesperides.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

FLESH

FRAGILE in rapture, we explain
Its durability in pain.

And hard to kindle, it is doomed
To inner flame, and soon consumed.

And quick to fever, its defense
Is shaken when the chills commence.

It hungers . . . loses appetite
For things that once were its delight.

It thirsts . . . and at the wayside wells
Some legend of cool springs it tells.

And in it something beats at bars
Like wings remembering the stars . . .

And still the most of it is stirred
By something obvious or absurd!

SONG

THESE I asked not, but these I have:
Wounds too deep for a common salve;
Hunger, too proud for the husks of swine,
Seeking ripe wheat and the laden vine;
Thirst, too hot for the pond by the mill,
Seeking a clear spring over the hill.

These I hoped for, and these I find:
Healing herbs where the dusk is kind;
Harvests golden and grapes with paunches
Billowing over the fox on his haunches;
Water that flows from a flower of stone
Over a hill where I have gone.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

PLOWMEN OF THE DESERT

I

HERE still the narrow valley lies between
The tawny cliffs still crouching, face to face,
To cast their shadows on the dusty green
Of grasses hardened in the heat. A trace
Of silver glints along the river bed,
And little willows cluster, here and there,
Where hidden waters trickle to the edge
Of drouth . . .

Now only silence and the air
Held like a caught breath! Long, it has been said,
The valley fed a tribe, and from each ledge
The smoke of many fires was lifted when
Straightened, above crude plows and furrows done,
The hunched bronze shoulders of the desert men,
And eagles dipped into the setting sun.

II

Stretched prone upon a ledge,
I hear the whisper of blown sand; below
The hazes gather slowly. From the edge
Of creeping chill, the lizards turn and go.
I look into the sky . . . No mighty arc
Of wings is there . . . Across the jeweled tides
Of air, before the coming of the dark,
A flock of gray doves glides

STAR-DUST AND STONE

To little willows . . .

On the weathered flint
Of ledges, only sunset strikes the spark!

III

And now long after, it is told how men
Once more came to this valley with their plows
Of steel by horses drawn, to turn again
The ancient soil. Then pastures for the cows
Were small green squares fenced in, and hopeful corn
Made gestures of its growth in other squares
About the square board shacks, and one who stood
To look down from the cliffs saw patterns born
To checkered meanings and, through mystic airs,
Saw figures moved—as if the Game were good!
But when stored moisture had been drained by roots
A few good seasons, slowly squares were merged
In dusty green and blowing sand, to fade
At last and leave the valley with its shoots
Of little willows—while thin horses, urged
Into the distance, some new journey made . . .

IV

Stretched prone upon a ledge,
I hear the whisper of blown sand; below
The hazes gather slowly. From the edge
Of creeping chill, the lizards turn and go.

V

And here I wait while all the valley's scars
Are healed with shadows, knowing very soon
Will come a Plowman turning up the stars
From endless, deep, dark furrows, with the moon

STAR-DUST AND STONE

His lantern on the Plow whose buried share
Whispers along the valley, down the air—
Across my heart—forever on and on
Until the furrows fade into the dawn—
Those left . . . unseen . . . but O, how surely there!

JOURNEY

FLESH that has never burned with fever,
Bone that has never ached with chill,
Love that has known no dark deceiver,
Mind that has never failed its will,
Cannot follow me over the hill.

Backs that show no scars of lashes,
Breasts that have never bared to flame,
Flame that has never leaped from ashes,
Charity that found no blame,
Cannot know the way I came.

Dreams that have had no pledges broken,
Hopes that have failed no first intent,
Lies that have lived as they first were spoken,
Faith that never knew wonderment,
Cannot know the way I went.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

DESERT FANTASY

THE starry tide had risen
And covered, far and wide,
The sands; the moon had added
Her splendor to the tide.

Against the azure headlands
That lifted far away
The endless waves in silence
Tossed silver clouds of spray.

And as I watched, a moment
It seemed the ledge must be
A little rock-bound island
In some enchanted sea.

So, like a shipwrecked sailor
From out the night, I came
To gather twigs of cedar
And sit beside the flame.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A STAG COMES TO DRINK

A STAG comes to drink at a spring that is flowing
Its silver to pools of the grasses blowing
 In shadows of trees,
And he comes like a beautiful shadow emerging
From patterns of shadow, and morning is surging
 About him . . . He sees
No shape that he fears, and no scent of danger
Warns him of enemy or stranger
 Within these bounds
Of mountains aflame with wind-blown embers,
But still he comes as if he remembers
 The rush of hounds
And blast of the horn, or the red flame darting
From leveled steel, or the dark boughs parting
 Before the leap
Of mountain lions, or wolf-shapes trailing
His brambled course, or lynxes wailing
 Through troubled sleep . . .

From far I watch him drink . . . He passes
Again a shadow in rippled grasses
 And glides away . . .
I cannot change his need—so never
Wish change in him. May he be forever
 Elusive prey!

SOMBRERO

THE tawny felt that made the crown had learned how
mountains stand,
And caught the sweep of eagles' wings to circle in the
brim,
And diamonds of the rattlesnake were glinting on the
band
And little shining silver bells were dancing around the
rim.

A circle of the castanets should keep a thing like this
Beneath the crimson flowers in a patio of the stars—
Beneath its brim a dancer's hair should cloud the hidden
kiss
And all the night be drunken with the spilled wine of
guitars . . .

May no stiletto wait to dart thin silver from the gloom
Lest these bright silver bells be drowned in rose stains on
the stone!

Let eyes be stars to shine on it, and lips be faint perfume
To whisper words of old romance that have become its
own!

The tap of high heels on the stone should shake the silver
bells
And from a shadowed balcony a red rose should drift
down
On laughter, such as dreams have heard along the moon-
lit dells,
And brush its petals on the felt that soars into a crown.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

Before the dawn a dancing sprite more lovely than the
rest
Should lure it down a little street from the patio of the
stars
And cloud beneath its brim her hair while lips in silence
pressed—
Till all the world was drifting out on last notes of guitars.

SIESSTA

OLD Carlos nods against the shaded wall
With white mustachios billowed from his lips.
Rainbow serapes of the silence fall
On heights, and distance drifts on slow cloud-ships.
His worn sombrero's brim slants over eyes
And shuts away mirages on the plain,
And ghosts of lost armadas on the skies,
And trails where blown sands filled the tracks of Spain.

No throb of splendor in the dust can lift
This weight of sun at noon, no dream discover
Lost El Dorado, and no music drift
To wake the lost love and the ancient lover . . .
Old Carlos scorns a changing world in sleep,
Disturbed at times by bleating of his sheep.

BURRO BELLS IN THE MOONLIGHT

DOWN a trail of the mountain,
Far out through the cedar dells
And on through the sands turned silver,
I heard the burro bells—
Like bells, made out of the moonlight,
On a phantom burro train
Coming from El Dorado,
To fade on a moonlit plain.

Far, by some lost mine's portal,
I heard a coyote cry . . .
But I heard no shouts from a driver
When the burro train went by,
No beat of hoofs in the moonlight,
No clank of the saddled ore—
Only the passing music
Of bells the burros wore.

Down a trail of the mountain—
Then where across the plain?
And I strained my eyes in the moonlight
To see the burro train . . .
And saw but the drift of shadows
Past heights, through cedar dells,
Then heard drift out in silver
A fading sound of bells.

THE CAVERN

UNDER the mountain's shadow
 The shadows of mountains
 Loom again in the cavern;
 The stones like stars
 Flash over valleys that fade
 In uncertain distance;
 Waters break into foam
 With force that jars
 Stone and shadows; above them
 The arched stone heavens
 Drip with crystalline pendants
 Hung in the night
 Caught forever in stone;
 And walled forever
 Currents of wind surge down
 From the jeweled height
 And toss like a handful of jewels
 Our torches' fantastic light.

Shadows move on with us
 And we are shadows
 Moving along the cavern
 That we explore . . .
 Eyes, brushed by fluttering wings
 Of mysterious darkness,
 Glimpses catch through them,
 And little more . . .

STAR-DUST AND STONE

Seeing a glint of silver
On worn stone sliding
Into the wells of darkness,
And blinking near
Flowers of stone, the sullen
Beautiful captives,
Domes, arched to darkness, aisles
To darkness, clear
Of footsteps . . . long departed . . .
If they were ever here.

A DESERT CHARACTER

HE is a figure on the stage of space,
Alone a moment in the endless play
Of destiny . . . He is not out of place
With all the shimmered sands that stretch away
To columned haze of mountains on the skies.
Not by the casual words we hear him say
But by the far-off note in them one nears
The changeless distance that is in his eyes,
The silence grown articulate to his ears.
He waded through flamed eddies of the dawn
And saw mirages build a dream—and fade,
And felt the sting of blown sands, and went on—
To what he does not tell . . . but something made
This sense of an unsheathed Damascus blade!
He tells less than he knows, and seems to know
Of us more in a glance than we of him
By staring long, and when he turns to go
Along the silence of the world's blue rim,
He is not like one known too well, but one
We longed to meet before and never did . . .
Then having met, knew more of stars and sun,
And something more of things the distance hid—
And with these things he has contrived to be
Still touched with something out of mystery.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

AN ARROW-HEAD

THE ridges here hem in a lonely land,
Like worn gigantic spearheads carved of stone
Still running crimson on the trackless sand
Or casting shadows, when the sun has gone,
Upon a shadow-pattern caught below,
And on a trail I found an arrow-head
Whose shaft was dust with all the dusts that blow
The bow, the bowstring and the hand that sped.

Perhaps from ambush of the sabered grass
This singing stone was sent into a breast
And finds no glory left where shadows pass,
In sands that shift along the windy crest.
And if the bones were here I could not tell
The one who aimed it from the one who fell.

THE LITTLE SPRING FLOWS CLEAR AGAIN

THE little spring flows clear again
While I stand looking close to see
What clouded it. If wings were here
To splash the silver merrily
They flew before I came too near.

And if a fawn had rubbed its nose,
Thrust deep in silver running cool,
Upon the bottom of the spring,
It heard me wading in the pool
Of shadow where the thrushes sing.

The little spring flows clear again,
But now is clouded in my mind
The flight of wings that went away—
And something that I came to find
Was loveliness afraid to stay.

DESERTED FARMS

A BOUT deserted farms there is a sense
Of waiting for the ones who went away.
Old orchards cling to fruit and by each fence
The morning-glory faces greet the day.
Through trees at twilight, by each lane or wall,
Expectant whispers quicken when once more
Old doors may creak—in wind—and mow and stall
Awake to gusty feet along the floor.

The moon, from empty pastures on the hill,
At first seems like a lantern coming home,
And crickets, chirping far away and shrill,
Make sounds like laden axles over loam . . .
The land stores richness waiting, and who knows
That waiting is in vain while longing grows!

COCK-CROW

A FIRE that smoulders is his brain;
A sudden wind has blown a spark.
He wakes and fans the air with wings
And sends his challenge to the dark.

The regularity that times,
Through all the nights, the sound he makes
Of trumpets and of flags unfurled,
Precludes the theory of mistakes.

That cry has winged from fallen walls
Where victors could not long rejoice—
But neither victories nor defeats
Have still that periodic voice.

A fire has smouldered in his brain
From age to age and clime to clime . . .
He best assails the dark who knows
The dawn will come in its own time!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A PLACE FOR FLOWERS

WILD ducks were flying north
And drizzling rain had stopped
The plowing; men went forth
With spades into the garden where still dropped
Rain's silver seed in showers
From blowing maples that were rooted deep . . .
I heard my mother calling, "Keep
A place for flowers."

And when the rows of corn
Grew taller there than I,
Corn-flowers grew; each morn
The morning-glories climbed blue walls of sky,
And deep in clover bowers
Wild roses smiled from their dew-freshened sleep—
As if One watched and whispered, "Keep
A place for flowers."

And in the dreams I dream,
And in the plots that wait
The spades that drive and gleam,
A spirit stands beside an olden gate.
And through awakened powers
Of earth, and men, who still must sow to reap,
I hear a voice still calling, "Keep
A place for flowers."

INSPECTION

TWO nightshade berries dew with wonder
 Became a hidden muskrat's eyes
Beside the stream, and hidden under
 Leaf-shadows dozed the dragon flies.

It took a little time to ponder
 The bloom to see the humming bird;
And quail were watching over yonder,
 Unseen until their wings had whirred.

We see a few things, watched by many,
 Disturbing many, disturbed by few—
When we had thought there were not any
 Wings left to see . . . until wings flew.

A LEADER

IN arguments he wore down sense with noise
And thought he won with other voices still.
His wife was trained to follow and his boys
Were cowed beneath the lashes of his will.
His horses pulled a double freight in fear
And aged too early with their shoulders raw;
In church his singing made his neighbors hear
Massed thunders of inexorable law.

The very stubbornness of sod was turned
To riches that once his were bound to stay—
But when his wife's clipped flame no longer burned
His boys had grown enough to run away,
And, facing circumstance, he fought alone
Like some old ram that butts a wall of stone.

WHEN WE HAVE PONDERED

WHEN we have pondered through how many years
We live to shape one thing a dream conceives,
We wonder that One who designed the spheres
Could draw the lace-like tracery of leaves,
And turn from stars and winged cloud-caravels
And mountains lilting onward into space,
To shape the lily of the valley bells
And paint the rapture of a pansy's face.

The airy hammock of the oriole
Swings through the storm that topples walls of stone,
And down in secret tunnels of the mole
Is blindness sure as sight that is our own—
And, pondering, we are no longer willed
To tear apart what we cannot rebuild.

THE STORY OF A HOUSE

THE house had reached the age when timbers know
Their strength to shut a world out, and when stones
Know of their strength to shut a world within.
It stood on cliffs that echoed back the sea.
Above it were great circles of the hawks.
Below it was a village with its back
Against the cliffs. At wharves, now rotting down,
Once docked the sailing ships from whose dark holds
Boxed colors and the baled scents of the East
Emerged like genii from a smoky cloud.
Now only fishing boats tugged at their ropes,
And slow dark water slapped the drunken piles.

To this old house a sea hawk, Captain Blake,
Came back from fabulous bickerings with the sea
When age had dulled his eyes but not the flame
Some spark from hell had started in his brain.
He brought with him his tokens of the sea,
Shawls fiery with the dragons of Cathay,
Kimonos cherry blossomed in Japan,
And pagan trinkets out of Singapore.
He brought the boisterous temper of the Horn,
And solitude of doldrums, and a hate
Like quick side-snapping reefs that toss the foam.
A meek wife, like a partridge that a hawk
Had mated, died the year of his return
And left a daughter, Jane, turned twelve, to keep

STAR-DUST AND STONE

The house for him. A birthmark, like a stain
Of blood across her left cheek, made her shy
Beyond a natural shyness, and she stayed
About the lonely house upon the cliffs,
Preferring thunder of her father's voice
To snickers of the village boys and girls.
And though her form filled out in loveliness,
As if to make amends for one marred cheek,
No lovers followed from the village store
When she was seventeen, and only once
Her father, thumping up the stairs, had found
Jane, with her good cheek to the mirror turned,
At dreams wrapped in a shawl of far Cathay,
Brought from the sea chest, and his hawk eyes glared
Upon her for a moment, then his voice
Crashed like the thunder in the quiet room,
“Commencin’ thoughts to lure the men, by God—
If one comes here I’ll roll him in his brains.
You little hussy, I have seen enough.”
She dropped the shawl and fled into her room
And drowned with sobs the thunder rolling down
The shadowed stairs.

In five more years the sea
Called back its hawk on one last lonely flight
And Jane was left alone to keep the house.
“The house is hers with all funds,” said the will
Of Captain Blake, “so long as she remains.
And if she leaves, the Court must take from her
The house and all funds for a Sailors’ Rest.”
And so the house possessed her more than she
Possessed the house, and she who used to fear
The thunder of a voice was lost at last
In endless quietness. At night she heard
Sharp gnawing of the mice along the walls

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And that great monotone that was the sea
Breaking its waves against the towered rocks.
And she rebelled within herself. There came
The hungers that she had not known before,
Wild dreams of sea-nights breathing of the South
When shadows seemed to crush against her breast
Remembered fragrance such as flowered shawls
Held in the sea chest that was hers to keep.
Some kinship to her father stirred behind
The outer calm her mother left to her,
And she became more shy, like one afraid
Of secrets that were glamorous in her blood,
But some new fragrance drifted from her bloom
Of womanhood, and men would turn to look
When she went past them to the village store.
Some shook their heads and murmured, "It's a shame
That birthmark covers one cheek—seems to keep
Kisses from covering the other one."
And some men talked to her and took delight
In blushes like rose petals drifting down
Soft whiteness of her neck, but only one,
A young, wide-circling hawk who came at times
To see an aging mother, stopped the girl
Along the cliff-path leading to her house.
He grasped her hand and took her basket, then
Felt still the touch of silk turned warm in sun.
She knew him well enough, this Jimmie Doyle,
Who used to be the meanest boy in school . . .
He used to snicker at her flaming cheek . . .
He said, "The basket's heavy for you, Jane.
I'll carry it," and something in his voice
Made her keep silent while she looked at him.
She said at last, "I'm glad you're safely home."
And he replied, "Tomorrow I go back."

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And then they walked in silence up the path.
His arm brushed hers and something tingled there
And she walked farther from him, half afraid.
Late afternoon was hazy on the sea
Below them, and above them gloomed the house.
Above it were great circles of the hawks.
Beside the gate he paused. "I'd like to come
An' see you when I'm home again," he said.
Jane answered him but he could hardly hear
Her voice above the far sound of the sea.
"All right," she said, "Safe voyage," and was gone
Into the house, and Jimmie Doyle went down
The path and did not see the circling hawks.
The silent house seemed suddenly to beat
With wildness of her heart. She stood so long
Beside a window watching him go back
Into the village that she seemed to see
The slow swing of his shoulders through the haze
When he had passed from sight.

"Next time he comes,"
She told herself, aloud, "I'll ask him in."
Next day when she was in the store she heard
A group of old men talking in the street.
One voice was louder than the rest. It boomed,
"That Jim Doyle skipped. His mother had to sell
Her place to help him out. Some girl he got
In trouble down the coast . . ."

Jane clutched the boards
Along the counter, and the dizzy floor
Swayed under her a moment, then she went
Into the street. The group of men was there,
The same stones, and the houses, but the world
Seemed different to Jane. With leaden weight
Upon her feet she reached her house at last

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And fell upon her bed and wept. The night
Brushed from the sky the circles of the hawks
And circled it with stars and still she wept . . .

O to be gone from that house, from the world
She knew, into some island with the palms
To sink thoughts in a sea of leafy sound
Or let them drift away across lagoons
Of moonlight still unrippled by a prow,
On out to foam-horizons where had passed
The last slow sail . . . Or just to be a man
For mad carousals in the pagan ports,
To crush the laughing lips of dancing girls,
To drain the glass and hurl it down—and go
Along the typhoon-sprouting straits, along
The untrimmed edges of a watery world . . .
O to be gone from that house—but she stayed.
Above it were great circles of the hawks,
Beyond it monotones that were the sea.
Time drifted out into the monotones . . .

Jane woke from dreams to hear the sound of steps
Upon the dark porch and a whisper came
Like sound of curtains stirring at her window
In winds from sea. She saw the lightning flash
Like flaming swords through curtains of the clouds.
She leaped from bed and slammed the window down.
She heard the sound of hands that groped to find
The doorknob and she knew the lock would hold.
The storm was rising level with the cliffs
And Jane stood trembling, pressed against the door.
“Jane . . . Jane . . . Wake up, Jane,” came the husky
voice.
It struck her like a blow there in the dark.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

"He's drunk," she thought . . . "Jim Doyle, you go away,"

She cried behind the door, "Go back to her . . .
Go back to her . . . I heard what you have done."
"Jane, I'm just back," the voice was eager now,
"It's all a lie they told. Unlock the door."

"Jim Doyle, you go away," she cried again.

The storm shut in her voice, it clouded his.

She heard a sudden pounding of the rain
And crash of thunder breaking through it, then
The shaking of the door, till even that
Was lost in rising fury of the storm.

She did not know how long she stood. A lull
Came in the storm at last. Again she heard
The hands upon the door, the eager words,
"We bought a better house, south on the coast.
I've come for you."

"Jim Doyle, you go away,"

Again she cried and tasted salt of tears
Upon her lips, "I hate you! Go away!"
And Jim Doyle turned and went into the storm.
Jane knew that he was gone. She heard all night
The gnawing of the mice along the walls.
And something in her would have called him back
And something hated him or was afraid.

It was not her fault that he missed the path
Along the cliffs and fell into the sea . . .
No doubt that he was drunk, the people said,
A wild rake better dead—and that was all . . .
But what had he been doing in the storm
At Jane Blake's house? They wondered and they talked
More than they wondered. Sly one, yes she was—
With her old father's devils starting in

STAR-DUST AND STONE

To have their round! The gossip spread to Jane.
The women scorned her, passing in the street.
And men grew bold. A change came over her.
She flashed a smile one day to hide the pain
That gnawed at her as mice gnawed at the walls
Possessing her—and so the men forgot
The birthmark covering a thinning cheek
And covered one with kisses in her house
When night brushed out great circles of the hawks
For circles of the stars, and drunken song
Drowned out the sounds of sea and gnawing mice.
And now she wore them—how she wore them now:
Shawls fiery with the dragons of Cathay,
Kimonos cherry blossomed in Japan . . .
And men came from their bickerings with the sea
To find the fragrant haven of her breast . . .
The house had reached the age when timbers know
Their strength to shut a world out and when stones
Know of their strength to shut a world within—
But Jane was far by typhoon-sprouting straits,
On untrimmed edges of a watery world,
Through doldrums, and beyond side-snapping reefs
That toss the foam—her laughter raised to drown
The waves that broke on rocks below her house.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

MOMENT INTERLUDE

A SHIP of cloud fades down the west
With sunset dripping from the prow,
And sleepy doves drift in to rest
 Along the swaying cedar bough.
I drop my pack upon the crest
 And brush aside the sweat that stings
My eyes, then turn to ponder how
 A far-off shadow-mountain swings
The moon upon its shoulder now,
 While waters, like a flight of wings,
Drift silver down the furrowed brow.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

THE LITTLE WOLF

THE coyote is a little wolf
Who leaves with an insouciant air
When stronger hunters pause to look—
And then he is not there.

With an apologetic droop
Unpleasantries he would forget,
And lets his magnanimity
Be seen in silhouette.

Let cougars stalk the maddened bulls,
Let prowling lynx and eagle fight—
He is the shadow at the edge
Of shadow, day and night.

Before the victor's feast is done
The little wolf comes softly there,
But at respectful distance waits
So patiently his share!

At other times he feels the thrill
Of chase where sheep or lost calves stray,
Or glides along the whispering grass
With rabbits for his prey . . .

But he is bravest when alone
He squats upon a shadow-dune
And calls his kind across the night,
Nose pointed to the moon.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A FAWN'S FIRST RAIN

THE first slow raindrop sliding down a leaf
Was silver splashed against the sleeping fawn.
Two soft brown flowers, wakened in a sheaf
Of tawny wild grain, were its eyes, and on
The dappled skin a sudden ripple spread . . .
But other raindrops fell, and to its feet
The fawn leaped quivering and raised its head—
To find on airs a fragrance wild and sweet.

So when more raindrops scurried in their play
It made a silver circle in the grass,
Then darted under trees and hid away
But came again to see the silver pass—
And stood with wide new wonder in its eyes
Beneath a rainbow flung across the skies.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

MOUNTAIN AIR (THE OZARKS)

THE forests are crowned with dawn
And out of the dawn bright wings
Arise like sparks and are gone
Along the impassioned sky.
And my heart lifts and sings,
For air that danced over stars,
As the clear spring-water streams
Dance over the polished stones,
Swirls on its rainbowed bars
And sprays my flesh and bones
And washes over my dreams . . .

I stand like one in a pool
Of the mountain springs,
Cleaned and refreshed and cool—
With the feel of wings!

But O, for greater wings
Than the wings of a bird
Or of a heart that sings,
To dart and dip
In rippled lakes of the sky,
To rise, from the surface stirred,
In an arc, and drip
With a rainbow shower.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And then, near earth to fly
 And brush each thirsting lip,
 Through this enchanted hour,
Till myriad hearts revive
To the breath of it—alive
As one who stands in a pool
 Of the mountain springs,
Cleaned and refreshed and cool—
 With the feel of wings!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SUDDEN CHANGE

AT morn the gold-green filigree, that comes
Before the buds on maple boughs, was bright,
And prairie chickens boomed upon their drums
On hillsides lifted shining from the night.
Plump breasted robins strutted in the grass
And we had feared that they returned too soon
When we beheld the clouds roll up and mass
Along the northern edge of afternoon.

The rising wind blew darkness in, and sleet
Against the windows rattled through the night,
And then we heard the snow, the stealthy feet
Of chill that crept across the early light . . .
We heard the snap of twigs, from branches thinned,
And straining boughs that groaned against the wind.

WILD NIGHT

ALL night around the dark house went
The hounds of wind on some lost track . . .
I heard them sniff beneath the doors,
And go, and then come back.

An owl, disturbed among the boughs
Like waving arms against the moon,
Complained, and seemed to ponder why—
And then remembered soon.

A few dead leaves, escaped from grip
Of frozen ground in early thaws
And dried again, were blown with sounds
Of little slipping claws . . .

Until the dark house and my heart
Had restless things that sought the way
To go, and weary things compelled
To go when they would stay.

TO WILD GEESE OVER A GREAT CITY

DARK streams of pavements under misted light
Flow endlessly by sheer walls groping high,
And over muffled thunders of this night

I hear again your mournful, cadenced cry.
I cannot see your dark wedge driving north
Through slow rain but I know it wavers here
Above this sea of strange lights blinking forth
To blind you if perchance you come too near . . .
Fly not too low this night lest you shall be
Frail wreckage tossed on this unheeding sea.

Through first chaff swirled from Winter's threshing floor,
Past lonely fields and cliffs, I saw you go
To bask on sandbars of the south once more,
And when I felt again the soft winds blow
A faint perfume of earth I knew that soon
Would come your call across uncharted air
And I might see you pass before the moon . . .
But on this night I hear you passing where
The moon is lost, and something lost in me
Cries back to you, above this glaring sea.

Man's inner blindness cries for outer light;
Against the secret tide whose undertow
Pulls at him here this gesture of his might
Wings up in stone; the purrs of dynamo

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And motor, in his hours of darkness, keep
His world in rhythm, and your wings must beat
Unknown across this night, above his sleep,
Or fall a bloody offering at feet
Of some stone idol flashing sleepless eyes . . .
Your call fades northward on the misted skies.

Below you wild dreams blinded by the glare
Have lost the way. Once they had followed you
To find new wonder waiting everywhere
Plains stretched to heights and waters to the blue . . .
Where muscles strain no longer, nerves are strained,
Taut as the city's hidden net of wires.
What have we lost that all we here have gained
Must leave us puzzled, thwarted by desires?
While one stands in this night to hear you go . . .
Not happier now . . . not more contented so.

THE WELL

HE knew the silver root the springs
Pushed through the gloom of rock to grow
An airy spray of silver wings
Into the brook, a mile below.

And where he chose to dip his well
He met the stream, as he had guessed,
Like echoes of a silver bell
In ancient aisles, along the crest.

And in the filling well he tossed
A shining pebble just to see
The circles spread until they crossed—
And watched how full the well would be.

An oak was there. From oak and well
He started furrows through the loam—
And saw down rippled pastures swell
The widened circles of a home.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SECOND LOOK

ON this first vibrant night of faint perfume
The first look is not quite enough to see
If these are starry buds that burst to bloom
Or little stars with wings just breaking free.
And even morning in the pulsing blue
Shall need a second look to ponder long
The sudden bloom of plumage added to
The drift of blossoms quivering with song.

How soon shall come that twilight when the fall
Of blossoms whispers down upon the grass
And wings grow still on nests, and by the wall
One first look sees a rapture quickly pass!
O then a second look needs clustered dew
With phantom cobweb ladders climbing through!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

FALLING BLOSSOMS

NO quick rain, dropping a jeweled curtain
Between us and the sun, can go
And leave us wistful as these showers
Of blossoms.

Drifting and uncertain
In them instinctively we know
Something more intimately ours . . .
Something that Spring's recurrent rapture
Holds for a moment, and grows mute—
Seeing it fall.

And we have need
Of more than transient moods can capture
From contemplation of the fruit.
We set eternal moods indeed
Against the pitiless wind, to stay
The very cycles of completeness
That give then take away the sweetness—
But never take it quite away . . .
Even if we attain the darkness
Of waiting seed, or austerity
Of bleak boughs, if a metallic sea
Drives endlessly against the starkness
Of iron coasts in us . . . until
Hisses in cold rain the last lean ember
Upon the altar, and the heart grows still . . .

We shall remember.

THE LASH

IN him was something like an ox that went
Before the endless lashing of her tongue,
Until his own thick shoulders strained and bent
And dull pain lingered where the lash had stung.
His patient eyes took on a puzzled look
At some last furrow that her wishes trod
Behind his driven bulk, and still he took
The lash and turned on new unbroken sod.

Flat prairie lands of her existence grew
In richness she was not content to reap
For when age stiffened in his joint and thew
Her lash in vain seemed all its youth to keep.
It fell on thickened hide, while patient eyes
Looked back . . . as some old ox looks back at flies.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

O GOLDEN DAY

O GOLDEN day, O rapturous overflow
Of treasures perishable as our delight,
How shall we hoard you? How be less contrite
For exquisite patterns lost, the elusive glow
That slipped away? The tiniest leaves that blow
In your soft breath, the smallest wings in flight
Through your designs, have some inherent right
To share you more than we who watch you go.

Our very wistfulness may cause our lack
But we become aware that phantoms braved
Your light and crowd the edges of the skies,
Departing always, always looking back,
With shoulders bent to weight of little saved
From sacked, burned cities smouldering in their eyes.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A WAVE OF ROSES

A WAVE of roses broke against a wall
And on its crest the bees were jeweled spray,
And in me one voice said, "The wave will fall,
The spray be lost in air—the wall will stay."
Then said another softer voice in me,
"Roots feeding upward to the bloom have grown
Too deep—and someone watching here shall see
A wave of roses hide the fallen stone."

Then I remembered cities now so long
The dust where wild bloom's drifting pollen goes,
And some Age living only in its song
That dipped the dew from some antique wild rose,
And ships of which we keep in legend now
The wreath of rainbows that survived the prow.

THE QUAIL'S NEST

THE hay was cut, and showed
 The field's face turning brown
In sun and wind, except along the road
 Where whiskers of the weeds
Yet bristled. He was sent to cut them down
 Before they scattered seeds.

When half way down the row
 He heard a sudden stir
And saw a mother quail watch young ones go
 Like darts to safety sped,
And then draw his attention all to her
 By keeping just ahead.

Her wings dragged to invite
 His chase—the other way
From which the young ones had flashed out of sight,
 And from the spot still warm
With her brave breast; and so he let weeds stay
 To shield the nest from storm.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

WOODLAND INCIDENT

ABOUT the bush that hides the nest
Two thrushes dart, afraid to stay
But more afraid to go away.

Below, a shadow stirs the crest
Of weeds, and frantic thrushes see
How surely comes that enemy.

And what it is I do not know
But I shall hasten to the spot
And find what little brain is hot—
And see how quickly fear can go
To chill the thing that darts away
When it, in turn, becomes the prey . . .

A squirrel, safely on the fence,
Jerks with his scolding's vehemence—
As if the thrushes had his blame
For building much too near the ground,
As if the crawling thing he found
In flight was less than when it came
And he had found at last the wit
To tell just what he thought of it.
But, sensing his futility,
He lingers on, resenting me.

I do not care, since I can see
The thrushes turn and nestward fly . . .
For they are glad I happened by,
And so am I.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

CIDER

SO quickly were the blossoms drifted by,
And for so brief a time the boughs could hold
Plump ruddy cheeks against them in the sky,
I like to think of cider growing old,
In earthen jugs cobwebbed beneath a stair
In some old cellar musky-sweet and dim,
To gurgle in a glass and fill the air
With bubbled fragrance dancing on the brim.

And old cheeks, ruddy under tumbled frost
Of hair, in sly smiles once again must wrinkle,
And old eyes show they have not wholly lost
The wink of cider and the ancient twinkle.
Old men may sniff a hearty rustic mirth
From this aged essence of the dreaming earth.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

AUTUMN COBWEBS

THE wind in leaves was all the sound . . .

We saw unbroken cobwebs wait
Along the little lane, and found
Unbroken cobwebs at the gate.

Unbroken cobwebs at the door
And taut across the shadowed stair!
And brushed aside, they clung once more . . .
Still clung when we would leave them there!

From stone to weed they reached, and screened
A path along the orchard wall;
We found them on a ladder leaned
Among the apples left to fall.

They had no strength against our will—
But after we had left them there
How long it was we felt them still
And brushed aside the empty air!

DEPARTURE

AS one who sees wild grasses waving high
But not the fawn that runs; as one who sees
The circles spread on water under trees
But not the silver fins that darted by,
We look upon this moment and descry
The evidence of something here that flees
But never with the ancient certainties
Of bright wings turning south along the sky.

Not with finality of thistle-down
Upon the rising wind, and not in one
Despairing gesture of the falling leaf
It goes from us, while with a puzzled frown
We stare and feel between us and the sun
Significance grown poignant, being brief.

MEADOW LARKS

THE frosts on meadow grass have not congealed
The dew-like drops of melody that fall
From throats of meadow larks; across the field
Plump gold-flecked breasts, black-crescented, have all
The airs of proud parades; with flirt of tail
The first snow flakes may yet be flicked away.
Ripe seeds are stored along each hidden trail
And sunlight flows like mellow wine today.

Some morning I shall find in clustered grass
A few last revellers with necks drawn down
In feathers fluffed against the cold, and pass
In silence to the slopes wind-swept and brown,
To look back on the meadow frosted gray
And think of singing friends who went away.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A LONELY ROAD

I

WHEN Abner Johnson died at fifty-nine,
Worn out with the resistance of the soil
That had new reënforcements of the stones,
Each season working upward from supply
That seemed exhaustless in the hills, he left
The farm in keeping of a childless wife
Named Martha, who was forty, plump and fair.
She had been born among the hills and knew
Their stern demands, but Abner had been kind
In his gruff way. She dared not leave the farm.
It was a part of her. She did not love
The place but took it as her lot and grew
So lonely she was half afraid of it.
The crops were harvested when Abner died
And they meant only cash enough to start
Another battle with the soil . . . Alone,
She dared not face the planting, and for hours
She'd sit and watch the lonely road, and weep.

II

At heart a born reformer, Martha found
She could not change her loneliness by thought
And talk, although ten years before his death
She caused her husband to resign tobacco
Because she said it helped to keep him thin.
Now there was nothing but a lonely road
To watch for hours, and for a week at times

STAR-DUST AND STONE

No one passed by. She took to making dreams
Of lonely men who might come by that way
And find salvation from a world of ills.
She pictured most a man near her own age,
A little gray, with wistful eyes, perhaps
A little given to some need of change
From harmful ways, or wanting mothering
To make his life complete. Her loneliness
Grew eloquent with pondering the dream.
The nearest that she came to happiness
Through that first lonely winter was when chills
Came on the ancient cat, the only thing
To need quick care to save it, and she thrilled
To think how soon she made it purr again . . .

III

Thaws started in, and, looking down the road,
She almost lost her faith a man would come
To do the planting and find his reward,
And she began to plan to rent the place
Although she knew no one would pay a price
To let her live, for such unkindly soil.
Then one day while she watched, a stranger came
Along the road. She saw him drawing near
And fixed her hair and smiled her brightest smile
That lasted while she opened to his knock,
And heard him say, "Down to the village store
They say you might be needin' one to work."
She found words slowly as if much in doubt
About the thing to do—he did not seem
Exactly what she might expect, but still—
Someone must do the planting.

"Yes," she said,
"I need a man to work the farm. Come in."

STAR-DUST AND STONE

He was a shabby little man whose face
Was tanned and looked like leather left in rain,
And words were hard for him. At last he said,
“The farm I had last year was mortgaged down—
Bad crops, and storms, and wife sick all the time.”
“Your wife!” said Martha as if in surprise,
“And did she die?”

“No’m. She is strong enough
To be about again. She’s waitin’ now
Down to the village till I find a place.
Three young uns with her.” And his weathered lips
Were stretched into a smile.

“I see you got
A shed out in the yard, and that would do
For us to live in. Wouldn’t clutter up
Your house at all.”

Then Martha sighed and said,
“I must have someone here to tend the farm.
What pay will you be wanting?”

And he named
A wage so low she could not make complaint.
“The work will have to start in soon,” he mused,
“We got no place to go. We’ll work for keep
Until the farm needs us.” His wistful eyes
Clung to her shifting glance. At last she said,
“We’ll fix the shed to suit yourselves. They’s boards
Enough for it about the place. It’s sure
I got to have someone to work the farm.”

IV

She watched his quickened steps go down the road—
The lonely road that she would have to watch
With some half fear of its indifference.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

THE SEAL

THE cabin stands upon a hill
That faces meadows of the sky
Where all the dancing flowers fill
Their cups while dawn is passing by.

And who lived here and did not stay
I cannot find in any words
So much they did not take away
Is guessed in singing of the birds.

I see it in the little pool
Where birds toss rainbows from their wings,
I feel it where the shade is cool
Upon the eyes of watching things.

I sense it when the rabbits come
To nibble grass that grows so near,
And when the pheasant pounds his drum
Upon a log for me to hear . . .

It might be that I could forget
The cabin that I stood before
Had I not seen how Summer set
A seal of roses on the door.

CEDAR

S OLOMON had cedar ships to bear the gold of Ophir.
Cedar burned on altars in the temples of the Lord.
Pearl and beryl and ruby from their cedar caskets
Flashed their splendors in Love's eyes or on the Victor's
sword.

Tempest-twisted cedars on a ledge above the desert
Chant of this, against the wind, monotonous and slow,
Grown a little nearer blue-smoked altars waiting,
Rooted a little deeper in the rock of long ago.

Sunken are the cedar ships, squandered is gold of Ophir,
Crumbled are the altars now, the cedar caskets
spilled—
But cedar trees are growing near the sky above the
desert,
Tempest-tried and lonely like the dreams we have not
killed.

THE FORGE

EACH night I watched when pinnacles were tipped
With silver flame, and saw the hillsides, wrought
In stillness, patterned like a wing that dipped
In mountain lakes, and many times I caught
A glimpse, through cedars, of a canyon gnawed
Through jeweled depths down which the silver sped
As if from moon-drifts chaos piled, now thawed
And fashioned at some vast forge far ahead.

O I have thought I neared it—but to see
The rising moon climb some blue mountain wall . . .
And I have heard sounds that seemed leading me
To hear its starry thunder—then the fall
Of mountain waters! But so near the skies
Winds seem its breath, the stars its sparks that rise!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

WINDS, BLOW NO LONGER

WINDS, blow no longer on this day.
Hills burn from sparks the dawn let fall.
The cardinal wings a fiery spray.
The climbing roses top the wall.

A stream's white fire is lilting down
A meadow where the clover woke.
Far off the steeples of a town
Flame over boughs like rolling smoke.

The sun has turned a scythe to flame
That swings down fragrant rows of hay.
A lark that from the sunlight came
Sings notes of molten gold today.

There will be ashes in the hour
When ecstasies and flames depart,
Blown dusts of leaf and grass and flower . . .
Winds, blow no longer on my heart!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A CAPTURED HAWK

NOW may your sabered beak
 Snap on the empty air,
Your dagger-talons seek
 A hold with nothing there . . .
The amber flame of your eyes
 Will smoulder to despair.

You cannot tear the thong,
 Beat down the sturdy stake . . .
Plump quail parade along
 The little paths they make,
Soft doves unharmed arise
 From many a shadowed brake.

Although your wings could glint
 In sun, although you found
From drift of clouds no hint
 Of great wings downward bound,
We lured you from the skies
 To snares upon the ground.

For here it was you fed
 And now the feast is done . . .
Where clover nods its head
 The little wild quail run,
The doves, with no surprise,
 Are basking in the sun.

SONG

R EMEMBERING how mint and tansy,
Set deep for grasses to conceal,
Released, beneath a crushing heel,
The keener fragrance of my longing,
I should have known this thing I feel.

Remembering fragrance of the cedar
When rough bark torn in storm had shown
The wood with sweetness so ingrown
No darkness could find me mistaken,
I should have breathed, I should have known.

THE GOOD FIGHT

I HAVE tasted the salt of life in the blood on my lips
And have brushed away from my eyes the salted sweat,

And the thrill of the battle lashes with stinging whips
The hot strained muscles that are quivering yet.

And men have fought for less with their swords and spears
While banners snapped in the wind of other lands—
But I had nothing around me but shadows of years,
My weapons were only my brain and these bare hands.

Each bruise will mend and the blood's rush carry away
The poisons of fatigue, but the thrill will run
Again and again for the good fight—and I say
That is reward though the fight be lost or won.

TARGETS

IT seems a little while ago
We tested first the hickory bow,
The singing string; and arrows sped
To strike the target set ahead
A little farther day by day.
Then sterner ranges called away
The boys, with targets set at length
Of dreams sometimes beyond the strength
That strained at the resisting bow . . .
Now shadow archers seem to go
Before then, moving, range to range,
The targets down a course of change,
Until the last like frosted breath
Marks misted borderlands of death.

CHOICE

IT is not hard to choose between
The wings that battle with the rage
Of storm and untamed futile wings
That beat against a cage.

The lone wolf that has led the hounds
Then turns against the odds to bare
Its fangs has more than hopelessness
That struggles in the snare.

Caged wings must beat, snared muscles strain,
Until they grow too numb to feel
The solid and unshaken wood,
The cold grip of the steel . . .

O wings, when you must leave me, go
Along the tempest's thundering track!
O lone wolf, near the fading moon,
Go down before the Pack!

THE BOUQUET

B ECAUSE three little girls had roamed away
From heated village streets to lanes where grew
Wild flowers that they picked, then chose to play
At making calls, they did more than they knew.
The shaded cottage at the edge of town
Was always still, with drawn blinds and an air
Of secrecy, and mothers wore a frown
When passing near, and never entered there.

The little girls who tripped up steps, with sun
Caught in their dresses, lost the fluent speech
Rehearsed for calls. Before them stood someone,
With questioning eyes, quite near enough to reach
The offered blooms that wilted on the way—
Crushed to her face, dew shone on that bouquet.

THE RING

THE city caught Melissa in its crowds
As any small brown leaf is caught and whirled
Along the wind with many leaves of brown
And just enough of crimson and of gold
To make the brown leaves wistful . . . In the crowds
Was loneliness more keen than she had known
Before a distance-flowered rim of sky.
And, at the notions counter where she worked,
The other girls, so wise in city ways,
Had said, "You got to make a show. A heart
Of gold can't shine through dowdy clothes. Put on
An act! They don't play pussy-in-a-corner
Or drop-the-handkerchief in this town, girlie!"
And so she spent the little she could save
To play a part. She matched her wits with theirs
In tales of dreamed romance. She told so often
About the banker's son back home and how
They had an understanding that she thought
It almost true. At first the girls had laughed
But grew to half believe it. As the months
Dragged by she added details, then one day
A girl spoke out, "Say, kid, where is the ring?
A banker's son would flash a classy stone.
Seein's believin'" . . .

So Melissa faced
A new dilemma—but she answered well.
"He's busy at the bank," she said. "He's sending
The ring next week, and you just wait and see!"

STAR-DUST AND STONE

It had to be a diamond, of course . . .
A large one like a banker's son would buy . . .
And after work she hunted up and down—
Turned pale at prices. One clerk, in a shop
More shabby than the rest, took pity on her.
He said, "No one, but experts, knows so much
About a stone. Now here is one! Just look!"
She saw a large one flashing from its case.
He gave the ring to her. She put it on
And looked until the tears burned in her eyes.
"Look good?" he asked.

"O beautiful," she sighed.

He whispered to her, "Lots of 'em you see
Are just like that. I'll sell it *right* to *you*.
He charged so little for it—only twice
What it was worth.

She paid and went away

With strange elation. In her dingy room
She flashed her hand before her many times,
Arranged her hair before the mirror so
The light would fall upon the ring. She thrilled
To it as she had never thrilled before.

Next morning at the counter she had raised
A languid hand to touch her hair. A girl
Beside her whispered hoarsely, "God, the rock! . . .
She's got it, girls. Big! Well, I'll say it is.
Just see it shine."

She proudly stretched her hand
For them to see.

"Third finger on the left,"
Another girl half sighed, "I don't mean maybe!"
"When is the wedding?" asked a girl . . . Melissa
Assumed an air of great sophistication,

STAR-DUST AND STONE

“O, in a year or so—we’re too young yet
To settle down out *there*. The city’s got me—
A year or so . . . He might decide to come
And start a bank in here.”

And so the days

Went on with added glamour—then she met
A sober young man who lived near the place
She roomed. He saw her running in the rain
One wild spring night, from work, and took her home
Beneath his old umbrella. Later on
Their friendship grew; sometimes they went together
To shows or took long walks about the parks.
He kept books in a store and saved his money—
Unheard of thing—to buy a little farm . . .
Away from noise and sham consigned to fools.
One night he held her hand, and said to her,
“I don’t suppose you’d like it on a farm.
A stylish girl like you would find it dull—
I guess I’m taking up your time.” And then
He blurted out, “I love you—anyway!”
And started home in utter dumb confusion.
She would have held him back; she wished to tell
How she had left the country and how lonely
The city seemed until he came . . . but, strange,
She felt he might not care for her so much
If he knew just how common she had *been*.

The next week he had asked about the ring.
“Are you engaged?” he wondered.

“Well,” she said,
“Not just exactly—but—”

He interrupted,
“I couldn’t get a ring like *that* for you.
I guess I’d better go . . .”

STAR-DUST AND STONE

His hurt white face
Turned from her and she saw him reach the door.
She tried to cry, "It's only imitation—
Yours would be *real* . . . For God's sake stay! I'll tell
you!"

It's not my fault. The city! . . ."

Words were caught
In sudden sobs that held them back. He left—
Would he come back?

MARIGOLDS

A JADE vase in the quiet room
Had grown, with all the curtains down,
Jade stems and leaves, and wore the bloom
Of golden sunlight like a crown.

It was the time between the fall
Of grain-gold corded in the sheaf
And leaf-gold drifting to a wall—
And such a time for dreams is brief.

And so the jade vase held for me
More than the things that can be told . . .
So few dreams ever come to be
Tight buds—and then a burst of gold!

THE DROUTH

WHERE gold-flecked green had shone
A sheen of bronze was spread
By hot winds blowing. Prairie land had grown
A vast that drooped forlorn
Beneath a cruel sun, and leaves were dead
Before their time, and death was in the corn.

I saw the meadows bowed
Before a scythe unseen,
And over them, caught in a cage of cloud,
A hawk drooped on its wings . . .
Far off, the cattle sought the last bright green
Near shrinking silver of the meadow springs.

And I remember now
The change, the sense of loss
I felt in watching—not quite knowing how . . .
My father stood awhile
With clenched hands, set jaws, eyes that stared across
The land—then turned to me a weary smile.

Since that day I have learned
How other things, as green
As corn, turn brown, how many things are turned
Like leaves where hot winds fell—
Then once again my father's smile is seen . . .
And I have hoped that I might smile as well!

MOSS AGATE

FROM glinting drift of sliding glacial seas
And swirling floods of meteoric flame,
It keeps the coolness that was under trees,
The green unfaded, patterns still the same,
Each light and shadow on the ageless sprays,
As when the first wild sky with dawn was sown . . .
A miniature that captured summer days,
The structure of a dream revealed in stone!

Had not the stone embraced this loveliness
Stone had been only stone, this fragile green
Had faded soon to vanish in the press
Of dusts, and we had never guessed or seen.
We see, but find no meaning to devise
This sense of restful coolness on the eyes.

INSCRIPTION ON A CABIN DOOR

WHO enters here is wise to leave outside
All that he would not wish to find within.
Four walls stand firm. A hearth of stone is wide
To glow for you. Cut wood . . . One must begin
In action what is prompted by desire
Before the hands are spread above the fire.
A plain roof's over you—but over it
Remember that blue-jeweled roof of sky!
Behold now table, chair and bed, each one
From timber aged and scented in the sun.
And here's a window through which dawn will fit
A smile upon your face, when it comes nigh.
Across the trail a mountain spring is clear.
Your fare is what you bring—or what you find,
And you'll be judged by signs you leave behind—
But if you can, add to the writing here . . .
And close the door—but keep an open mind.

COBWEB FESTOONS

THESE are the threads of silver, where last dew
Is jeweled, in the patterns of a dream.
I find them on the boughs where winds break through
To shake the tarnished gold down on the stream.
I see them span the sumac's lilting flame
And sway above the globes of purple wine
Wild grapes had hung in sunlight when I came,
And down their lanes the last wings southward shine.

They cling to loveliness they cannot hold
From this departure that our longing knows;
They span the pathways of the pollen's gold
And lanes of fragrant dust that was the rose.
I feel their wistful clinging in my heart
Above the secret doors where dreams depart.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

FARM AUCTION

THE scattered groups of men
 Stood in the yard at last.

And over drone of words there she could hear
 A crash of laughter now and then.
Live stock already sold was driven past
Along the dusty lane . . . The auctioneer
 Had raised his voice again.

She did not sit and weep
 As many women do

At such a time . . . It seemed she pondered well
 Each waiting thing, each lonely heap—
How much it seemed to her when it was new,
How little here to scatter out and sell . . .
 And now too much to keep.

She saw hands lifting clear
 The things she could not hold,

And raucous laughter kept on breaking through
 Responsive to the jest and leer,
Until it seemed her very dreams were sold
And she could never lose, though things were new,
 Cries of the auctioneer.

And so the sale went on—
 And so the days must go.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

And in her eyes was something on the block
 Of Fate, with Change the only dawn
For one who passed through each new change to know
A voice that came forever with its shock
 Of "Going, going . . . gone!"

MONUMENT

A LOFTY man had found his rest at last
Beneath a small white slab of marble here
In this farm burial ground where year by year
A tree grew as if rooted in his past.
As once he stood alone upon a vast
Of upland sod, it stands. In it no fear
Of tempests held it back; its trunk is clear
Of blemish as a proud ship's shining mast.

Its roots have pushed aside the little stone
Now hidden in the grass, as if they knew
Their growth must be the only monument
To lift in praise of his stern thews and bone
That drove a furrow shining onward through
The slow awakening of a continent.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

AUTUMN CRICKETS

A DROWSY music drifts across the dusk
Where crickets fiddle fore wings out of tune
With half heard threnodies of grass and husk
And leaf-waves breaking on the low red moon.
This is the music that we heard below
The opened rose, in harmony with all
The fragrant rhythms of the night, the slow
Dance of the moonlight on a flowered wall.

Beneath the shadow-dances of the grass
Earth-pulses throbbed in these articulate wings.
They stay . . . though on this night the witch-clouds
 pass
Above the pathways of departing things.
We find, where shadow circles now are drawn,
The music playing . . . and the dancers gone.

THE CHASE

WHILE five loud ignorances argued,
One keen intelligence had tracked
The evidence, and when the others
Came up they found it with the fact.

The five were like contrary hunters
Disputing ways an old fox went,
The one was like a lean hound knowing
No argument could change the scent.

The chase was done but not the shouting,
For each one of the five would show
That he was right . . . Again in circles
A phantom fox was seen to go!

Five ignorances kept noisy, telling
More than they knew, and none too well . . .
And one intelligence was dozing,
Content with more than it could tell.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

DISCARDS

THE crowds are gone; the park is quiet.
Leaves blow along the faded grass;
Torn papers, bursted toy balloons,
Are left on paths where shadows pass.

Some one will clean them up in the morning,
Some one will carry them off again . . .
But who will find beneath the hedges
These rag-piles of discarded men?

Hunger will crawl in the chill of morning,
Thirst will creep in the dawn once more . . .
Strike through rags . . . and set them shuffling
Back to the streets . . . from door to door.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A TOAST IN AUTUMN

THIS last pale water lily leaf I shape
Into a cup and fill it at the springs
And drink a toast, O season of the wings
Departing and of frail designs that drape
This beauty soon to tremble in the rape
Of roistering winds . . . To each flushed leaf that flings
Itself against the haze, to downy things
Air-tossed, I drink the gestures of escape.

Then, having drunk to these, I fill once more
The fragile cup with this imperishable
Bright water, and I drink to things that stay:
These cobweb ladders slanting to a store
Of ruddy fruit, these secret seeds that fell
Upon the great breast to be tucked away.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

GLORY

YOU know the kind of town Midvalley is
When I have told you that its greatest pride
Has been for many years its cemetery.
Tall trees have made a shaded path to it
And it is tended better than the lawns.
Of Sunday afternoons Milt used to go
From stone to stone and pick the ones he liked.
Some were pretentious, and a very few
In that fast-growing village of the dead
Were humble . . . Pride was really fierce about it
And should one speak of poor streets or a store
That needed paint a voice was to be heard
Speak with impatience, "You just go an' see
Our cemetery!"

Milt had been a clerk
In Bascom's store for nearly forty years
And people said of him, "Milt ain't so bright
But he's good hearted."

He had found his way
To young Midvalley with some friends who came
To start a farm, his parents having died
When he was six years old. The people thought
He was not strong enough to work for them
And so he started at the grocery store
For board and room, and grew to be a clerk
With fifteen dollars coming in each week.
He saved enough at middle age to buy

STAR-DUST AND STONE

A little cottage that he kept alone.
And if the Sunday afternoon was fair
He went his ambling gait among the stones
And picked the ones he liked.

One day he asked,
"Where do folks go to buy the monuments?"
And, having learned, he said no more about it
But went one day, the first he'd had from work
Except in sickness, and came back and said,
"I bought me one . . . I'm gettin' old."

"One what?"

A customer had asked.

"A monument,"
Said Milt. "I'm gettin' old . . . I bought me one."
No one thought much about it then . . . Milt died
That spring and many people said he failed
So fast because he did not eat enough.
They learned that he had sold his house before
He went to buy the stone, then stayed and rented.
No one could find that he had left a cent.
Some said he'd been a miser, and the man
Who bought his cottage said the cellar walls
Must have repairs—and then dug up the floor.
One day a truck came from a near-by town
And workmen started setting up the stone
On Milt's grave . . . Soon the people heard of it
And went to see . . . The monument was up—
A costly slab of granite, quite the best
Of all the cemetery boasted, carved
With name and dates, and under them the words:
"He Rests in Glory."

SEA BURIAL

BARED heads are at the rail, a voice that drones
Half heard against the wind is lost at last
Down wind and waters thundering monotones;
Against gray hull where endless seas slide past
A form is outlined, slowly lowered now
To that vast solitude. The waters part
And close—no landsman ever feels quite how
Sea burial grips and chills a watcher's heart.

And you that bear your dead to wintry ground—
It has its spotless mantles of the snow,
And peace is near; an old accustomed sound
Of trees is heard; it is a spot you know.
Your hands may touch it—here new spring shall be . . .
But, God, the tossing, troubled, trackless sea!

I AM ONE WHO HAS STOOD

I AM one who has stood in a town
Under the cliffs by the sea
Where the taut sails were going
Where I had longed to be,
And the narrow streets led down
To the wharves, and spray was throwing
Wild kisses over me.

I knew that I could not go
Like sails, and I could not stay
Like cliffs—and a wind was blowing
Keen over cliffs and bay . . .
And that's how I came to know
Why dreams must be, and, knowing,
Have less of them to say.

DIRGE FOR A SAILING SHIP

THE voyage ends where dripping fangs of stone,
Bared to the storm, struck deep into the hull
As white as foam. An everlasting moan
Drifts skyward from the beach, and a lone gull
Wheels over beauty broken and betrayed,
Sending a querulous, far-reaching cry
Along the vastness. Now, as if afraid
Of passion that has spent them, waves creep by
To lift these shattered spars. Again they fall.
The tattered sails droop, lifeless, never more
To hold the wind. And, facing a grim shore
Where scowling rocks pile up an ancient wall,
This prow shall never lift again.

O distant ports shall wait in vain for her,
And only the sad eyes of dreaming men
May see her when the moonlight seems to stir
With sails that soar in distance and are gone
Around some foam-flecked headland of the skies,
Or catch a shining glimpse of her at dawn
Before the lights burn clear and blind the eyes
With sudden tears.

In her was fashioned something that the years,
Against the surges of oblivion, cherish.
That she might be, the proud trees had to perish—
To grow proud once again in hull and mast
Lifting her wide white wings to brave the blast
Or charm the gentler winds to do her will . . .
Now masts are fallen and torn wings are still.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

The crushed prow trembles in the undertow.
Such trees as formed her on their heights yet grow
And star-drift moves along each supple bough
And springs fill beakers of the mountain stone
For roots to drain, but men who shaped the trees,
Who caught their spirits in the mast and prow,
Are gone or ancient grown.

Yet may their sons and daughters sometimes wonder
Why break upon their dreams the distant seas
And the heart lifts and answers the far thunder,
Yearning from sleep for masts with crowning sails
To brush aside the stars and find lost trails
Of rapture, into harbors of desire . . .

Ah, there shall be no more like her! The stars
Will be more distant, and their last touched fire
Runs thin and fades along these fallen spars.

FULL MOON

WHAT magic isles are waiting to be found
Now that the phantom ships arise from sleep
In far fantastic harbors of the deep
Where hidden currents move without a sound?
Sails of an antique splendor, outward bound,
Drift through the stars to which the waters leap
In silvered haze of distance, and they keep
The course toward something that is yet unfound.

Forever dreams have told of bleséd isles,
Forever ships with proud and lovely sails
Have borne the hearts of men to break at last
Upon some tragic reef of fated miles
Or come through all the lashing of the gales
To look on fading islands they had passed.

JUNGLE RIVER

THE hot moist breath that tropic earth exhales
Is held in jungle by the heavy air
And colors glinting like a serpent's scales
Creep out of shadow-patterns everywhere.
And under boughs that coiling vines have bent
The oily silent river slides away
Into the insect-whirl, at last to vent
Its yellow poison in an azure bay.

On each dead limb a buzzard's silhouette
Observes the drifting log turn crocodile,
And in a hollowed log a back of jet
Streams and the paddle dips another mile
To some half tipsy wharf where produce piles
And black girls wait with moist inviting smiles.

TROPIC TAPESTRY

HOT colors drip from jungle walls
And splash upon a blue lagoon.
Behind an ebon shoulder falls
The silver crescent of the moon.

A jungle girl bears on her head
A basket where the dew still drips
From piled fruits, and a stain has spread
Its laughing crimson on her lips.

The great fire opal of the dawn
Flames out of green-gold on the crest
And splashes sudden light upon
The ripe fruit swaying at her breast.

She goes to market; in the slow
Soft rhythm of her hips no pause
Denotes she sees the jungle grow
Barbaric fringes of macaws.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

THE PEARL

THIS sacred globe in perfect luster keeps
A beauty that we might associate
With peace and purity of jeweled deeps
In which molluscan shells with wonder mate
For such production, if we did not know
The secret of the shell that whorl on whorl
Wraps all its irritation, making grow
The permanent reprisal of the pearl.

How vain that careless fancy has compared
To this the salted perishable tear! . . .
When nothing matches it but thought that dared
To build around intrusive pain and fear
Till they were vanquished, and the Ages caught
The luster and the richness of the thought.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

BLUE LAGOON

O SAILING ship with the prow like the neck of a swan,
 You have come back again to the blue lagoon—
To be but a part of the splendor quickened at dawn,
 Of palm-fringed, golden languor of tropic noon,
 Of haze-hung, silvered patterns of the moon,
And of all dreams that spurred adventurers on
Past fang-reefs whetted through a froth of foam . . .
 But what has turned you home?

When first your shining sails had settled down
 Into that distance where the sea and sky
Are one, I know you sought no common town
 With dark wharves where the little merchants ply
 A sweating trade, but came to anchor by
Some coast with ragged rainbows for a crown,
And pearls became your cargo . . . and your name
 Was known where dreamers came.

You did not change; in vain storms gnashed at beams
 Of seasoned wood. The cargoes changed; slow weight
Bulged at your sides and strained the tortured seams . . .
 The precious cargoes pass, and common freight
 Must fill the holds of proud ships soon or late—
As something god-like in the heart of dreams
Is done at last for men and they must bear
 Either longing or despair.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

Who sailed you back into the blue lagoon?

And what of men who sailed you? Where are they?

In them what imps must dance a rigadoon

Of magic cargoes that have slipped away!

And how long must they hear the captain say,

“The homeward voyage was good . . . but over soon . . .

There was no ship like her through all the years!”

And blink to hide their tears.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SONG

IF a rainbow arches a field where a man is plowing
And the furrows long to reach to the rainbow's end,
Turning their mellow fragrance up to the morning,
There'll be in that field not only crops to tend.

For something shall grope in the one who turns the
furrows,
Akin to the roots that in the soil are born,
And when he comes to gather all the harvest
Something in him will be taller than wheat or corn.

But if a rainbow comes when a man is plowing
And each slow furrow ends at the end of the field
He may have bounteous crops—but after the harvest
He'll count his gold, complaining of the yield.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

IN AN OLD WOODLAND

I AM one who has seen
The leaves dying, the leaves falling . . .
In the nights I have heard
The trees sighing, the winds calling . . .
I know my life must be
Kin to the life of a tree.
I know my dreams of green
And silver, quickly stirred,
Must fall as leaves.
I know not how . . .
I am young now,
But in my youth there is an age that grieves—
I am one who has seen
The leaves falling, the leaves dying . . .
In the nights I have heard
The winds calling, the trees sighing.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

TONIGHT WILD GEESE CRY OVER THE FARM

TONIGHT wild geese cry over the farm;
Through mist-hung airs they are southward flying,
And restless sleepers toss in the night
And in their hearts is something crying.

The dead leaves drift from lofty trees
About the gables, softly falling
Upon the shingles with no wind
To lift them where the geese are calling.

The farm boy, sick of corn-row walls,
Who planned to run away to sea
Then found his roots too deep in soil,
Mumbles and tosses restlessly.

His sister, in her room where boughs
Against the gable panes have pressed,
Sits up in bed, with flowing hair
Flung over longings at her breast.

The old ones of the farmhouse sleep,
So weary that the night's wild mood
Is like dead leaves with restless sounds
Upon a roof's grim fortitude.

STAR-DUST AND STONE

WINTER WOODLAND

IS this the place I heard the thrushes fling
Their jeweled notes on rising tides of dawn?
Where leaf-stir and the light along a wing
Was rapture? . . . Now on steel of sky is drawn
This hill in thin cold lines; bare tree trunks, set
Against the snow, fade out into a haze
Of frosted breath; a squirrel's silhouette
Returns the petulance of hungry jays.

A fox track follows where a rabbit went
Along the frozen stream, and here an owl
Stopped mouse tracks, with its talons clutched and bent
On snow-crust; here tracks show how weasels prowl
In widened circles . . . Frost creeps here below
For roots . . . set deeper than the frost can go.

DRIFTED LANE

AFTER the last bright wings had lifted,
After the cobwebs sagged in rain,
Whispers of flame ran there, and drifted
Colors of leaves were down the lane.

Only an old house came from hiding,
Peering down with its windows blurred,
Hearing once more a ghostly riding
Under the bare boughs winds had stirred.

Faded soon was the glow, and frosted
Patterns covered the vanquished flame . . .
Only the passing wind accosted
Something waiting where no one came.

Trackless now is the deep snow . . . drifting . . .
Filling the lane . . . to a snow-sealed door . . .
Never the sound of cold hands lifting
The latch any more!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SNOWBIRD

YOUR fluffed white feathers I had lost
Among the arching ferns of frost
But for the beaded gems of eyes
That shine where dust of crystal flies,
And but for little coral toes
On crystal clutched when the wind blows . . .

When tiny sparks of frost were blown
I thought you sang and notes had flown
So quickly that I could not hear
Although I listened, standing near.

And then a window, curtained bright
With frost, was raised by hands so light
No sound was made. I saw you go
For crumbs of white bread on the snow . . .
A flutter of white hands, and then
The frosted curtain closed again!

STAR-DUST AND STONE

SONG

WHO roams in a haunted castle,
Where glories are dusting down,
May think he hears on a stairway
A sibilant silken gown.

Who listens long to a sea shell,
But never sailed the sea,
May think he hears the echoes
Of its cruel threnody.

But who shall dare to listen,
The day when dreams depart,
To winds . . . in the empty castle,
Or to the sea . . . in his heart!

